

A

REVIEW

OF THE

Affairs of *FRANCE*:

With Observations on TRANSACTIONS at Home.

Tuesday, November 20. 1705.

Preparatory to my most Humble Application, to the Reverend Members of the *Convocation*, I have endeavour'd to lay it down as a Maxim, and with me it must remain so, till it is fairly Confuted; That the Church of *England*, is so far from being in any Danger from the *Dissenters*, that the Discording Circumstances of the *Dissenters*, is the real Security of the Church.

I Humbly Crave leave to Infer from hence. Then,

1. It cannot be the Interest of the Church, to Oppress the *Dissenters*; since it can be no bodies Interest to Suppress those, upon whom their Security so much depends.

2. If there be such a Oneness of Interest, there might easily be a Reconciliation of Charity.

The Breach of Charity among the Church of *England* Pretenders, has no Ground or Foundation, so fair in its Out-side, as the

Dissenters being upon a different foot of Interest from the Church, and being therefore willing to pull it down; but if it be apparent, that their Civil Interest is thus the same, and that if the Government was at a stop, and the Throne Vacant, the *Dissenters* would, if the Power was theirs, re-establish it in the Church of *England*; this Foundation is all fall'n to the Ground, the Dangers of the Church from the *Dissenters* is a meer *Chimera*, a Shadow; an *Ignis fatuus* of State, to draw the People into Bogs; and Brakes of Confusions, and to Embroil those together who are good Friends, in the main have but one Interest between them, and only want Eyes to see it.

In the next place, I Humbly Represent, That if it would certainly be the Effect of the *Dissenters* Choice, to set a Church of *England* Government uppermost, if it was put into their hands; it would be Preposterous to

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Argue, they would not endeavour to Maintain that, which if it was Dissolved they would Restore; to what purpose should they pull down, what they themselves would be at the Pains to set up again? This would be Sailing two ways with one Wind, indeed, this would be all Contradiction, and Incongruous Ridiculous Nonsense, and the *Dissenters* must be worse Fools, than any of their Enemies could ever yet have the Face so much as to suggest; *Occasional Conformity* has not half the Inconsistencies in it; this would not be Worshipping God and *Baal*, but Worshipping neither God nor *Baal*; it would be pulling down their own Houses upon their Heads, to no other end, than to have the Pleasure of Building them up again, and having their Bones broke in the fall.

If this be so, what shall we say to Laws of Separation, Tests, Acts, Exclusive Method to distinguish Parties? What are they made for, but indeed to weaken the Church, and have been made use of by the Artifice of the Churches own Members, to break the Harmony, that would otherwise have Established National Charity, and have kept us as one People, which some People then in Rule durst not admit of? when therefore the Interest of the Parties, come to be set in a True Light, the occasion of these distinguishing Laws, will be seen to have their Life in State, not in Church Policy, and the Security of the Church of *England*, when judg'd of, will appear, in freely joining with all those, whose Interest it is to support her, and who depend so much upon her Safety.

Some have Argued strenuously, against the Lawfulness of a Sacramental Test in general; and I have never yet seen their Arguments fairly Confuted; but I am sure the Arguments are much stronger against the Prudence of it, as the Circumstances of this Nation now stand.

However we know who made that Law, and against whom; whether he was Outwitted by those that since turn'd it to a differing Intent, from what he design'd, I will not determine; but certainly that Par-

ty of Men, who pointed that Law against *Protestant Dissenters*, have ever since wounded the Interest of the Church by it, and Exposed her to want the Hearts and Hands of the *Dissenters*, in Case of Extremity.

But if this Union of Interests, makes an Act of Distinction Unnecessary and Pernicious, much less can it be Argued, that there is any Pretence for an *Occasional Bill*, as it is vulgarly Call'd.

For what injury can it be to the Church of *England*, to have the *Dissenters* Conformable to the Church? To say they are Hypocrites in continuing to Dissent, is to say nothing at all in this Case, because, their continuing to Dissent, may have Reason for it; if any Objection lies against them, 'tis in the Case of Conforming at all; to which I Humbly say, This is the Evil that wants to be Remedied, and this is what I mean, when I say to your Lordships, in the first of these Papers in four Particulars;

1. That it is in your Power to settle and secure the Private Peace of the Church in this Nation.

2. That it is in your Power to take away all Pretence for an *Occasional Bill*.

3. To remove all manner of Ground, for the late Violent Pretended Apprehensions of the Danger of the Church. And,

To heal and make up the large Breaches in the Church; restore her Communion, and Cure the Pretended Schism of the Nation.

As, my Lords, this is the True and Original Ground of these Papers, so it must for ever stop the Mouths of all those People, who Accuse the *Dissenters* of Hypocrisy, Schism, and such like Crimes; since if it be in the Breast of an *English* Convocation to Heal the Breach, and yet do nothing, but what is not only Lawful to do, but may prove their Duty; it will lie hard upon those, that shall be the proper Occasion of such Barrs and Hindrances, as not Lead only but Drive People into Temptation.

This Paper shall be no Charge or Accusation, against any, either Private or Publick; let it lie at their Door who are Guilty,

Guilty, and though it would be worth while to examine who are the Causes of the present Schism in the Church, *as it is call'd, for I do not allow it to be a Schism*; yet I had rather enter into the Examination of the Remedy, than of the Original of these things; since Recriminations have very small Tendency to healing Breaches, which, I hope, is the true Design both of this Paper, and of its Author.

Here is a great Clamour rais'd against the *Dissenters*, as Hypocrites, in the Case of *Occasional Conformity*—— I readily agree to the Charge, where any Man among them can be charg'd with Conformity as a meer Qualification, and no Man has spoke plainer on this Subject, than the Author of this Paper, tho' his words even in that Case have been run on to a greater Extent by both sides, than ever their Author Design'd them.

But, My Lords and Reverend Fathers; may I presume to use the Freedom to propose one sad and serious Enquiry here—— At whose Door shall all this Hypocrisy lie, if the Stumbling-block of Conformity be laid before them on Purpose to ensnare them, and lead them by the hand into this Temptation; and if all these Burthens are bound and laid on the Shoulders of innocent People, for things that, however repugnant to their Principles, are own'd to be but Circumstantial and indifferent, and which without any Injury to the Church, or to the Consciences of your Lords, may be abated and removed?

Offences will come, says the Text; but, *Who be so them by whom they come*: Suppose, for the sake of Argument, and not otherwise, all the Hypocrisy and Sin in *Occasional Conformity*, that the warmest of our Antagonists can pretend to, *By whom do these Offences come*? are they not from positive Impositions of Terms illegal in their nature, however made legal by the Sanction of human Laws; I mean, making Religious Distinction. Term of Qualification for Civil Employments? Is not this levelling the Sacred to the Civil, and making the Holy Ordinances and Institutions of Christ Jesus, Attendants to Politick Projects, Pages to Secular Inter-

ests, and Accidents to Matters of Government?

Nor is this all, for the Argument of its being an Establish'd Law, *the Righteousness of which I am not to dispute*, is some Answer: But, my Lords and Fathers, if the Imposition of things really indifferent, as Terms of Communion, is a Grievance Prior to this Law, and is the Foundation of this Law, or a thing without which this Law could not have stood; for had not these Terms of Communion been imposed, the Communion it self had not been dissented from, at least not in such a Degree; if then there was first an Illegal Imposition of Terms; and then a Law built to make those illegally imposed Terms of Communion, a farther Test for Publick Qualification; I think, with Submission, the Legality of the latter Imposition must fall to the Ground of Course.

I wave, my Lords, the long Debate here of the Civil Magistrate, having Power to make indifferent things in the Worship of God binding and necessary; that Authority, I think, speaking, with Submission to your Reverend Assembly, remains unprov'd; But I am examining then, Why that Civil Authority, supposing it had such a Power, should Exert it to the Extent, when in the Consequences it is apparent, how detrimental it is to the Publick Peace and Union, on which the Prosperity of these Kingdom so entirely depends.

Suppose then, my Lords, The Prudentials of these Laws were now to be Examined by your Lordships, it being my Design not to enter into the Controverted part of the Churches Power any more than of the Princes Power.

But this Humble Address, is to your Reverend Assembly; beseeching you, in the Bowels of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and in Behalf of a Wounded Nation, a Wounded Church, a Dispers'd People, and an Innocent Posterity, to consider with the most Serious and Christian Affection possible the following Particulars.

1. Whether the Prudential Part of Church-Impositions, be at this time to be defended?
2. Whether that which the Church thinks
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or the General Good and Interest in our Age, may not cease to be so in another, and merit to be examin'd at least; and if found so, to be rectified.

3. Whether your Reverend Assembly may not remove all or the greatest part of our present Difficulties and Dissensions; not only without any Prejudice to, but to the manifest Advantage, Reputation, and Honour of the Church?

I have here all along carefully Avoided, entering into the Antient Debates of this Religious Controversie, as things I pretend not to be Qualifi'd for; I think the Subject I am upon wholly New; I believe it was never started before, and I believe also, there never was a juncture in the past Ages, so extremely proper to have these Matters consider'd in.

I am fully perswaded, if the Consideration of these things, with Temper, Charity, and Christian Love, prevail'd so upon the Present Church of England, as their own Weight and Value requir'd, some other Consequences might follow, tending more to the Settlement and Establishment of the Peace of this Nation, than most People imagine; and I cannot but hope for it from the Wisdom, Temper and Charity of your Reverend Assembly, and of the present happily inclin'd Government.

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